

FEB 20 1963

FOIAb3b

HE'S WILY, TOO

Fidel? Just a Big Ham, Says Donovan

CPYRGHT

BY M. W. NEWMAN

The world is full of some "incredible" notions about Fidel Castro, according to a man who knows him pretty well.

James B. Donovan, the tough-minded New York lawyer who negotiated the release of 1,113 Cuban invasion prisoners, pictured the Cuban premier as complex, wily and "a ham actor."

"People ask me if he is illiterate or a drunkard," Donovan told an audience here.

"These are misconceptions. He has a doctor of laws degree. And if he has been drinking, I would say he is coming out pretty well.

"He is a master of propaganda, a Latin volatile type."

DONOVAN indicated that the burly Cuban boss apparently can take a ribbing and return it in kind.

"When we wound up negotiations on the exchange of drugs and medicines for the prisoners," the silver-haired attorney said, "I told him I had done a lot for the Cuban people."

"In fact, I said that I was thinking of running against him in the next election, and that I thought I could take him."

"Castro thought this over for a minute, and twirled his chair. He's a great ham actor. When he said that maybe I

was right, and consequently there would be no election."

* * *

DONOVAN, 46, drew his portrait of Castro before a meeting of the Inland Daily Press Assn. in the Drake Hotel Tuesday.

A questioner in the audience accused the lawyer of picturing Castro as a merry fellow while ignoring his "diabolical side."

Donovan replied that he could not be expected to answer questions like that while still engaged in negotiations for the release of more Castro prisoners.

He is scheduled to return to Havana in about two weeks to seek release of 25 to 30 Americans held by the Castro

* * *

HOWEVER, the attorney said with a grin that he told Castro at one point in their dealings last year:

"Don't say anything good about me. A couple of friends like you and I won't need any enemies."

To which Castro replied, according to Donovan:

"Don't worry—we men in public life understand these things."